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A NIGHT AUCTION AT SYDNEY.

FRANK LAYTON: AN AUSTRALIAN STORY.

CHAPTER XII.

SYDNEY BY GAS-LIGHT.—WHAT AN OLD INHABITANT HAS
TO TELL US.

FROM the solitude of the bush we invite our
readers to accompany us to a busy city. It is a

summer's evening; and, in its brief twilight, the Hyde-park and the streets of Sydney are crowded with its inhabitants, enjoying the cool and refreshing breeze which has sprung up after a sultry, suffocating day. Let us bend our steps to the

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park; and, taking as our guide an old inhabitant, we will incline ourselves to his free and unsolicited communications.

"That man," he says, "whom you see riding with ostentatious display in his gaudy carriage, is one of the millionaires of Sydney, and owes his wealth to having stood twice under the gallows—once in England and once in the colony, with the luck of a reprieve each time. These were the beginnings of his fortune. He is now the honestest and most punctual man in Sydney—trusted by every one, and deceiving no one—being rich, and without the motives for temptation.

"That flashy-looking man in a tandem was transported for bank robbery. He is now one of the richest men in the colony. The proceeds of his robbery, which were considerable, were not recovered; and shortly after his transportation, his wife followed with the whole of the plunder. According to the system which then prevailed, she got him assigned to herself as a servant; and their fortunes were made."

"The portly inmate of that splendid carriage must, however, be at least the mother of his excellency the governor?"

"No such thing; she was, many years ago, transported for stealing a donkey."*

Our communicative informant might, however, qualify his flattering portraiture of convict life in a penal settlement by reminding us of tyrannical, cruel taskmasters, severe and partial magistrates, from whose dicta is scarcely an appeal; of the whip, the chain, and Norfolk Island. He tells us of men who have preferred death to the miserable existence comprised in the sentence of transportation; and of others who, to escape the wretchedness brought on themselves by former crimes, have escaped into the bush to commit depredation on property, embrue their hands, perhaps, in blood, to be shot down at last like wild beasts; or, re-taken, to terminate their course on the gallows; or, escaping the pursuit of justice, to perish by starvation in some mountain-gully. He tells of men brought up in luxury, then led astray, then convicted of breaches of trust in their native land, then herding with the depraved on board the convict ship, then, on arrival at the colony, handed over to the domination of an ignorant and brutal employer, then rebelling against the heavy thraldom, then tied up and lashed, then committing suicide. He tells us that the specimens he first pointed out are the exceptions, not the rule; though, at the same time, he confesses that among the most respectable families in Sydney are many whose progenitors entered the colony "under a cloud," as they would tell you; but he takes care to warn us that an attempt to reach this promising part of the world free of personal expense is an experiment too desperate to be tried.

And while he runs on thus fluently, we may have our own thoughts; and these thoughts are, that experience confirms what the book of books declares—that "the way of transgressors is hard"—that even the supposed prosperity of the wicked is but for a moment, comparatively; and that it is the blessing of the Lord, and that only, which

makes rich without the super-addition of sorrow present or to come.

Our friend, meanwhile, does not fail to point out to us that we are surrounded by a crowd of questionable physiognomies, and to congratulate us on the fact that the police of Sydney is numerous and active. He takes care to remind us that we have need to have cut our eye-teeth before doing business with certain sharp ones who smile friendly in our faces, and who boast of large balances at the banks; for colonial notions of fair dealing, he tells us, are somewhat looser than is desirable, even among those who have characters, of a sort, to lose. And he especially bids us beware how we ramble in the fast-approaching dusk of evening beyond the precincts of respectable habitations and brilliant gas-lights. In short, our friend is in the predicament of one who desires to say as much good as he can of his native or adopted city, in which, perhaps, he has comfortably prospered; but whose conscience is too tender to allow him utterly to conceal its defects. He bids us believe, however, that the excrescences he cannot help pointing out will some day disappear; or, at any rate, that the rising city is bidding fair to become—some day, he does not say exactly when—equal, at least, to any in the old world in point of good morals and orderly demeanour, as it is now superior to most in its fine climate and lovely Italian sky.

Our friend has detained us a trifle beyond our time; so, wishing him good evening, we continue our stroll. The park is, by this time, become deserted; and, bending our steps toward the city, we find ourselves in George-street, now almost clear of vehicles, but thronged with pedestrians like ourselves, parading the pavements, to see and be seen.

We look through large squares of plate glass into shops handsomely fitted up and lighted with gas, filled with costly goods, and busy with obsequious shopmen; and fancy for a moment that, by some magic conveyance, we have suddenly been dropped into a London business street. Dresses and shawls of the newest fashion are displayed in the windows of mercery stores, and ticketed, *secundum artem*, at "ruinously low prices," with ribbons of every colour of the rainbow, and of colours that rainbow never knew; gloves of true Parisian make; and "loves of bonnets," the bewitchment of which the fair damsels at our side cannot resist. Let us pass on, lest we, old bachelors as we are for the time, should be bewitched too.

Book-stores tempt us with new importations from the old "Row;" while sofas, French-polished tables, faultless looking-glasses, with all the modern appliances of household luxury, have no attractions for us, who are only strangers, having no homes to furnish. Here, jewellery and gold glitter in the gas-light; and there, cut glass and china which would compete with the display of a Pellatt and a Daniell. But we still pass on, and turn into a street of less imposing appearance.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NIGHT AUCTIONEER—A PHILANTHROPIST.

ON making our way up this street, a crowd round the door impedes our progress. We may enter—it is a public auction sale-room.

* See, for the above, a description of the Gold Colonies of Australia; by G. B. Earp.

Ha! here is our communicative friend, the old inhabitant, again; and, taking us by the button, he invites us to a dark and vacant corner, and perceiving, as he supposes, that we are athirst for information, he volunteers to enlighten us.

"These night auctioneers," he says, "are a class, above all others, noted for scheming: in fact, their existence depends upon it. They attend the day auctions, and pick up whatever is likely to sell; if damaged, they manage to sell it as sound, the light in the room being uncertain, as you see, and the crowd generally great. The money—I need scarcely tell you that—must be forthcoming on the fall of the hammer, and vain is any after-complaint."

"These night sales," continues our acquaintance, "generally commence about six o'clock, or sometimes an hour later. If you had been here half an hour before the time of sale, you would have seen a young man standing in front of the room, and ringing a bell, to attract the notice of casual passengers, and inviting them to enter. He is generally successful; and there are also many people who attend night auctions for amusement, and because they have nothing better to do; so that, altogether, as you observe, a pretty numerous company is secured. It is impossible, however, even for the auctioneer to be able to say what humour those present may happen to be in; and so capricious are they, that some evenings he may have a good sale and clear money, while there are other times, again, when he is hardly able to get a bid. The articles offered for sale are, as you see, miscellaneous enough. Watches, jewellery, boots and shoes, napkins, ales and spirits, pickles, cloths, hats and caps, books—anything. If you want a pen-knife, you may be suited here; and so you may if you want a dress-coat."

"Not a pleasant berth this, for the night auctioneer," our friend tells us, and as we do not fail to discover; "he must have a temper which nothing can ruffle. If he lose temper but once, the public are made aware of his weakness, and he need expect no peace for the future, as he will be laughed at and bantered, and every means will be tried to put him in a passion. In a word, he may go and try his hand at something else as soon as possible, and the sooner the better for him."

"Our auctioneer seems imperturbable enough," we remark, on seeing how good-humouredly he turns aside the insolent abuse of a half-drunk man who is what vulgarly called "chaffing," but not *chafing* him.

"Yes, he is made of the right stuff," says our obliging button-holder; "but, when he began this business, I did not think him at all likely to succeed. He formerly acted as clerk to a conveyancer, and could have but little idea of the business of an auctioneer. His room was just by; and as I felt some little anxiety on my neighbour's account, I determined to attend the first evening, and witness his success. For some days before, great preparations had been going forward for the eventful evening; shelves were erected, package after package came to the door, and disappeared in a most mysterious manner. A large white blind had been nailed across the window, so as to prevent any one from having even a peep at the interior arrangements; the neighbours were, to a

man, fierce and indignant at this attempt at exclusion. Towards the afternoon, a case of a very peculiar shape was brought to the door in a cart, and taken away inside in an instant, and the door of the room shut, before any of the observant spectators had time to form an opinion of what it could contain. But when, in a few minutes afterwards, a loud crash was heard in the new auction mart, the neighbours with one accord rushed to the door, with a full determination to know all about such strange proceedings. When the door was opened, they rushed *en masse* into the mart, and inquired what was the matter. They found everything in confusion. The shelves had not been secure, and had gone with the weight of the mysterious case, the contents of which lay about in sad plight; and there was such a horrid smell of sour ale, vinegar, and what not, as made the greater part of the intensely gratified neighbours face about in quick time. Great fear was entertained by some that, in consequence of this accident, the mart would not be opened that evening; the auctioneer, however, contrived to have everything ready by the appointed hour."

"Well, sir," continues our chatty acquaintance, "I ordered tea early that evening, as I was anxious to witness the *début* of the little auctioneer. I was one of the very first at the mart, and enjoyed some pleasure from viewing the manner in which it had been fitted up. The bell kept ringing. In a few minutes there might be half a dozen in the room; and the auctioneer took his stand, and began. I saw, at once, he was a poor hand. He had only one or two set phrases, which he kept repeating without any variation; such as these: 'The tea-pot is up, gentlemen; 'What do you say for it, gentlemen?' 'Say something for it, gentlemen.' There came a rush from another auction-room, to hear the new auctioneer, and now was the time to try his patience. A dirty fellow, who appeared to consider himself a wag, offered something for the tea-pot, about ninety per cent. less than its value. A general laugh followed; for this worthy seemed to be looked upon by his fellows as a wit. No person offered to advance upon the bid; and the auctioneer was about to put the article aside, when the wag roared to him not to do so, as he had purchased it. The auctioneer denied this; the fellow persisted; and the audience laughed. The auctioneer made an attempt to go on with the sale, but to no purpose; the fellow kept roaring out, 'Are you going to give me the tea-pot?' and this set the audience laughing again. A set of wicked boys, witnessing the sport, determined to come in for their share of it, and ran out to procure a handful of sand. They returned, and with this and other missiles began to annoy the auctioneer. All this would have tried the patience of most people; but he was a brave little fellow, and bore it all with good humour. After some time, a few in the room, observing the patience of the poor auctioneer, sided with him, and made an attempt to restore order. They had great difficulty in doing so, and had to threaten the accomplished purchaser of the tea-pot with summary vengeance from the arm of the law before he could be silenced. At length, however, this was effected, and the sale was allowed to proceed. It was not in the auctioneer's power to do much business that even-

ing; but his good-nature and patience won the esteem of many, and helped to lay the foundation of future prosperity. And now the little fellow is a thriving man.”*

During the time our loquacious friend, the old inhabitant, has been thus enlightening us, we have turned this way and that way to escape from his tenacity; and now, having seen and heard enough of a Sydney night-auction, we make a desperate push, and find ourselves again mingling in the crowd of George-street loungers. But we do not lose our friend so easily. He is yet at our elbow.

“Ah! I see who you are looking at. Mr. Elliot, that, sir. An extraordinary man—one of the most extraordinary men in Sydney. A sad story, too. You would like to hear it, I know.”

The gentleman thus referred to, whom we have just passed, and who certainly did attract our attention, is well deserving of notice. Tall in stature, and slight, with grey hairs overshadowing a countenance more marked by traces of sorrow than of age, yet beaming with benevolence, he is just the man to fix the eye of a passing stranger. If we may judge from appearances, he is in comfortable circumstances; and his hurried, straightforward, springy, trotting movement—neither a walk nor a run—evinces that he has, or thinks he has, something yet to do before night.

“Yes, sir, an extraordinary man: a sad story. I'll tell you about it. Years and years ago, sir—when Mr. Elliot was a young fellow of two or three and twenty, and lived in London—he was accused of being art and part, as the lawyers say, in some underhand transaction which brought him within the grasp of the law. He stood at the bar of the Old Bailey, sir, with a couple of consummate villains, who had, it seemed, made him their tool. The facts were proved clearly enough, and there was little distinction made between the parties; at least, not so much as might have been. The two principals were transported for life, and young Elliot for fourteen years. A good deal of interest was made, I have understood, for the young fellow; for he was well connected, and had a good character, only that he had been rather wild, as medical students too often are; but it was no use; the law must take its course, and he had been mercifully dealt with, the judge said, when an application was made to him to recommend the young man to the king's mercy. So out he came, sir.

“But afterwards, some circumstances came to light which proved him to have been innocent of any bad intention, though vastly imprudent, to be sure; and when young Elliot had been five years or thereabouts in the colony, a free pardon came out for him. But the mischief had been done, sir. His mother, a widow, had died of grief; the young lady to whom he had been engaged in England had cast him off, and was married; his prospects at home were all blighted; so he declared he would never return. He managed to get into practice in his profession, here, in Sydney, where he soon got a name, and is now reckoned rich; but he never cared to go into society. He might have married; a good many excellent

chances have been put in his way, but he prefers a solitary life, sir. He is very benevolent and liberal, and people say very skilful too. The poor will miss him when he dies, for he is a good Samaritan to them. There's no telling, in fact, how much good he does, in his profession and out of it. A noble, kind-hearted old gentleman, Mr. Elliot, sir; a thousand pities that he always bears in mind his misfortunes and disgrace.”

Having delivered himself of this narrative, our friend hastily wishes us good night, darts off at a tangent, turns a corner, and we see him no more. Dismissing him, therefore, from our minds, and shifting our grammatical tense from the present to the past, we resume our own particular narrative, to which our old inhabitant's unsolicited communications are to be, in some measure, subsidiary.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ADVENTURE.

It was on a summer's evening, then, long after the faintest gleam of twilight had disappeared from the sky, which was glorious above the clear atmosphere of Sydney with the bright constellations of the south, and when the gas-lighted stores of George-street were near upon the time of closing, and the last fall of the night auctioneer's hammer had been heard, and the crowds of pedestrians, of the better dressed or more regular classes at least, were, singly, or in pairs, or in groups, slowly wending homewards, that Mr. Elliot reached the small neat villa on the heights of Woollomolloo, which was his lonely home. He was tired and jaded with the day's peregrinations and professional cares, while the reflection that neither wife, daughter, affectionate relative, nor social friend was there,

“To mark his coming, and look brighter when he came,” perhaps cast a momentary gloom over his countenance, and deepened the lines of thought and sorrow which had furrowed his brow. His day's work was not over, however, and his little drawing-room was, that night, to remain unlighted and untenanted.

As his feet were on the door-step, Mr. Elliot heard his name respectfully uttered, and felt his arm gently touched. Looking round, he saw at his elbow a female, apparently young, and, as far as the imperfect light of the nearest lamp assisted his observation, good looking. Her dress was mean, and betrayed, in its untidiness, the negligence which is so often indicative of broken-hearted desperation. Her voice was soft, but weak, and interrupted by a cough which she vainly tried to stifle.

Mr. Elliot, arrested on his door-step, as we have said, paused to give the young woman time to explain her errand.

“I have been looking for you these two hours, sir,” she said; “they told me you would be coming home soon, and so I waited.”

“And now I am here, what can I do for you? what is your business?” asked the gentleman, compassionately.

“I wish you to come and see a patient, doctor.”

“A patient? to-night! who? where? I have already seen all my patients to-day; and I—I—excuse me,” Mr. Elliot added, after a scrutinizing glance at the young person “I have no know-

* See a lively paper which appeared some years since, in the pages of “Tait's Magazine,” under the title of “Australian Sketches.”

ledge of you. By whom were you recommended to call upon me?"

"By yourself, sir," said the female, faintly. I mean, sir, that you are known by what you have done, and are doing every day. You do not know me," the woman continued; "and I cannot offer to pay you much for your trouble; but if you will come and see the patient, it will be doing a Christian kindness; and as far as I can I will see that you are recompensed."

"Who is the patient, and where?"

The applicant replied that the person for whom she was interested was a young man, a stranger in Sydney, who had recently arrived in a coasting-vessel from Melbourne. He was ill, very ill, she said; and she named a certain quarter of the town which Mr. Elliot well knew as the refuge of the poorer classes of society in Sydney—a quarter not particularly agreeable to enter by broad daylight, and, after nightfall, reckoned positively unsafe. It was at a considerable distance, too, from his home.

"Let me have the direction," he said; "and I will call to-morrow."

"To-morrow! to-morrow, sir! It may be too late then," the young woman exclaimed, impatiently.

Mr. Elliot still hesitated. "Why come to me? Why not have sought medical aid nearer at hand?"

"I have, doctor. I went to three medical men, and they refused to listen to me because they saw I must be poor; and I am come to you because I knew you would not do *that*;" and the speaker cast an appealing look at the gentleman.

"Enough!" he said hastily; "my poor young woman, I will go with you, though I could wish it were to any other part of Sydney."

"There is not a corner in Sydney, doctor," replied the young woman, "in which you would be in danger. There is not a spot in which the sound of your name would not be your protection. The blessings of those who are ready to perish—"

"Lead the way," said Mr. Elliot quickly; "I will follow."

For some minutes, the doctor and his guide paced the now deserted streets in silence, and at a short distance from each other, engrossed probably by their several and widely different meditations. The frequent cough of the young woman was the only audible sound, if we except an occasional half-stifled sob which escaped her. At length, it was evident to Mr. Elliot that the strength of his guide was overtired; she stopped, breathed painfully, and then again hastened on with unequal steps. He pressed to her side.

"You are faint," he said; "take my arm."

The girl timidly and bashfully accepted the offered assistance, and for a time they walked slowly on in silence. It was at length broken by Mr. Elliot.

"You have not yet told me what ails this patient. What is his complaint?"

She did not know; she was not able to say. It must be fever; his colour came and went—he was now shivering, now burning—his breath was short, thick, and choking—his mind was wandering—he was bad, very bad; she could not tell what ailed him.

"You say he is a stranger in Sydney. Are you his relative—his sister?"

"No, no."

"His acquaintance? his friend?"

"Friend, sir, friend!" moaned the poor girl; "I have no friends, sir, not one. And this young man—I do not know even his name."

"It seems strange, then, that you should take such interest in the young man," said Mr. Elliot, rather coldly; "but go on."

"I will tell you how it was, sir," replied the young woman, earnestly; "I was going home late last evening. I had been out at work, sir, and had been kept two hours and more waiting before I could see the lady and receive the money I had earned."

"And what, may I ask, is the occupation by which you earn your livelihood?"

"I have no regular employment, sir," rejoined the poor girl; "I get work when I can, with my needle, at ladies' houses, and sometimes I can get a little to do at home; but I have often nothing to do for days together."

Mr. Elliot sighed. "Well, about this young man," he said; "where did you meet with him? and how?"

"I was getting near home, sir, wearied with my work, and was passing by a low public-house, just as a mob of drunken men were coming out of it. They got round me, sir, and began to insult me. I begged them to let me go my way in quiet; but they only abused me still more. I was very roughly used," sobbed the young woman; "and might have been killed, sir; such things have been done, and little stir made. I cried out for help; and then I was all but strangled, to stop the noise, as one of the men said. Look, doctor!" and, pausing under a lamp, the young woman uncovered her throat, on which were livid marks of recent violence.

"Poor girl!" murmured Mr. Elliot. "Go on."

"All at once, sir," the girl continued, "there were desperate blows, and a great struggle; and the young man, who seemed as though he had been drinking with the rest, but who had not spoken a word to me, good nor bad, said he would not stand by and see me misused. In a minute, he was down; and I don't know any more that passed, till I found myself on the road, and he supporting me. Sir, he wanted support more than I; he was much hurt. He staggered back, and would have fallen if I had not held him. He wanted me to leave him; but I could not, in such a place. He told me he had no home, that he was stranger in Sydney, and had not been here a day. What could I do, doctor? Observing him so ill, I took him to the house where I lodged, and got an old woman who lives there to be with him. He was ill, raving, all night, sir—was worse in the morning—and has been getting worse ever since. There, doctor, I have told you all."

"Not all: *you* have a history and a name," said the doctor.

The poor invalid turned upon him a look so full of anguish, that Mr. Elliot would have given much to recall the question. In another moment, however, the young woman had regained her composure. "I wish I could forget my history of suffering," she said. "Oh, I wish I could; but it will not last long."

"What will not last long, my poor girl?" Mr. Elliot asked.

"My life, sir," said the poor friendless one.

"If this is intended to work on my compassion," thought the doctor, "the girl is a consummate artist;" and, at the same moment, as though repelling his natural suspicion, the young woman said quietly, "I did not come to you, sir, to speak of myself, and it is not charity—common charity—that I have asked."

They had now reached the part of the town to which their steps had been directed. The habitations were low, dirty, neglected, shattered, and miserable. From some of them gleamed dull, murky lights; and occasional sounds of revelry, mixed with drunken shouts, disturbed the peaceful silence of the night. The street was comparatively empty of passengers, but here and there a policeman was dimly visible, glancing with a keen professional eye at every one who went by. Instinctively, the guide had shrunk from the doctor's side, and walked a few steps in advance of him.

Presently, stopping at one of the wretched dwellings, she pushed open a rotten door, and ascended a broken stair. Everything bespoke neglect and decay. Noiselessly, the girl opened a door in the upper story. A dim light was burning on the floor; and on a truckle-bed lay, tossing and moaning, the patient. The room was scantily furnished, but neater and cleaner in its arrangements than the doctor might have expected. A low fire was burning on the hearth, and beside it sat an old woman in a doze.

A few steps brought the doctor to the bedside of the unconscious patient. He was young, strongly built, but emaciated. His countenance was naturally handsome, though now distorted by pain. His eyes were closed, but not in happy slumber; his lips were moving; and as Mr. Elliot bent over him, his ear caught the muttered sound of a single word—"MOTHER!"

A BENEFACTOR AND A SELF-HELPER.

MANY years ago, almost as many as make up the average duration of human life, I lived peacefully, far from the tumult and turmoil of cities, in a quiet hamlet perched upon the summit of a hill, and commanding a view of near twenty miles forward along the level land of the valley below, and almost as much to the right and left on either hand. Down upon the broad and slightly undulating plain small towns and villages were dotted here and there, and in fair weather the white chalky roads which connected them together gleamed like threads of light in the sunshine. There was not very much that an artist would call picturesque in the scene, but it was decidedly beautiful for all that; and those who came to see it lingered long to gaze upon the wide panoramic view whose aspect was ever changing as the cloud shadows rolled gloomily across it, or the beams of the sun shone out fitfully, spotting it with patches of light. A natural spectacle of this kind is sure to make an impression more or less powerful upon the minds of most men. We need not be either poets or painters ourselves to appreciate the poetry and painting of nature, or rather of its divine Author. Its marvellous works differ essentially from those of its happiest imitators, by appealing successfully to every order

of mind, and not requiring, like the productions of man's highest intellect, a corresponding intellect on the part of those to whom they are addressed. It is but a truism to say that no two minds receive the same impression from the contemplation of the same object. We all of us view things through a medium of our own; and our happiness depends much more upon the quality of that medium than upon the objects themselves, whatever they may be, and whether they belong to us, are attainable by us, or are totally beyond our reach.

Among the few whom, in those early days, I could number as my friends, was an elderly, almost an aged, gentleman, who had retired from the active business of the world with the intention of wearing out the evening of his life in the tranquil seclusion of our little village. He had run a long career of usefulness, in the course of which, in addition to the performance of much physical labour, he had enriched the literature of his country by some substantial volumes yet to be found upon the shelves of the bibliopole. He had earned his *otium* well, and no man envied him the enjoyment of it. But what was the impression upon his mind, made by the unbounded landscape which lay open before his parlour window? Not that it was a spectacle to be merely enjoyed—though it is likely that that was the first thought—but that it was a field for exertion as well. He had not been many weeks settled in his retirement before he began to speculate upon the probable state of knowledge prevailing in the wide district which lay spread out before him like a map beneath his parlour window. As is the case with most practical men, his speculations led to experiment. He undertook short journeys into the villages which lay nearest, and made inquiries; he paid visits to poor families lying away from towns and hamlets, and found—how could he fail to find?—that many of them were buried in utter ignorance, and that, fair as the landscape looked when viewed from the heights above, it abounded in all the sad varieties of wretchedness and demoralization.

So the worthy man started a pilgrim's staff; and, having first succeeded in organizing weekly meetings in such places as could be loaned or hired at a small rent for the purpose, set forth on three or four nights every week, armed with a pocket-bible, to meet the labourers and their families after the close of their day's toil, and to teach them how to live a better life, and to look forward with hope and confidence to the joys of a better world. He had been at this quiet and unobtrusive labour for some years before I happened to know him. A chance acquaintance, commenced one summer's evening as, returning from the trout-brook in the hollow, I overtook him as he was ascending the hill, soon ripened into intimacy. I found his companionship profitable in many ways. He was full of information upon almost every subject, and knew how to impart it in the most pleasing and effectual manner; and he soon made me free of his library, which was ample and well-chosen, and directed my selection of the works most profitable to peruse. I grew by degrees fond of his society, and often devoted the long summer evenings to an excursion with him on one of his missionary trips. It was seldom that the assembled group awaiting his arrival numbered more than from twelve to twenty

persons—they were often under ten—consisting mostly of two or three fathers of families, a few women and children, and perhaps a farmer's boy or two, or a young ploughman, desirous of instruction free of cost. The old gentleman never preached to these little congregations. He shook hands with them all round when he entered. A hymn was sung, and that was followed by a brief and simple prayer; and then a chapter was read and explained in language adapted to the humblest intelligence, and always with some application to the condition and circumstances of the parties present. Then the children read their lessons, and wrote, some with their fingers in trays of dry sand, some upon slates, and some—the more advanced—with pens and ink in copy-books. When all was done, a short benediction dismissed the little band to their homes, and the old gentleman and I set off on our return. Sometimes, if I did not feel inclined to make one of his party, I would while away—less profitably, it is true—an hour or two in drawing a few of the speckled trouts from a neighbouring brook, rejoining him when the meeting broke up.

One evening in autumn we were returning from a distant village, and, having four miles to walk after the sun had gone down, sought to shorten our route by a nearer cut through field pathways, and over styles, by a way to which I was a stranger. The night was cloudy, and by the time we had wandered a mile from the road it grew too dark to distinguish the dim track meandering through the grass. I was fearful at length that the good man had missed the way, and expressed a doubt whether it would not be better to return to the road.

"No," said he, "we are in the right track. Yonder is old William's cottage, and his light is yet burning."

"Who is old William?" I asked.

"Oh," said he, "Old William is my Hebrew hedger, and quite a prodigy, I assure you. You shall see him, and judge for yourself."

Upon surmounting a stile I could see a light glimmering from a cottage casement, and we made towards it as fast as the darkness of the night would allow. As we came near the little dwelling, a white-haired old man was seen through the casement bending over an old volume, which he was reading by the light of a single candle. When he heard us fingering the latch of his garden wicket, he rose, took the candle in his hand, and came to the door, shading the light with his fingers.

"Ah, I thought who it was," said he, speaking in a broad country dialect, as my companion stepped up to him; "nobody else would be likely to come this way to-night. But you are not alone. Walk in, gentlemen, and sit down."

We did as we were invited to do.

"My friend," said the old gentleman, "would like to hear you read a chapter, William, if you have no objection to gratify him."

"None at all, sir," said he; "I was just going to begin the book of Job—spose I read the fust chapter."

"That will do very well, William."

And William began, much to my amazement, in a bold voice and with astonishing volubility,

אָשֶׁר דָּוִד בְּאַרְצֵינוּ אֵיךְ שָׂמַח דָּוִד

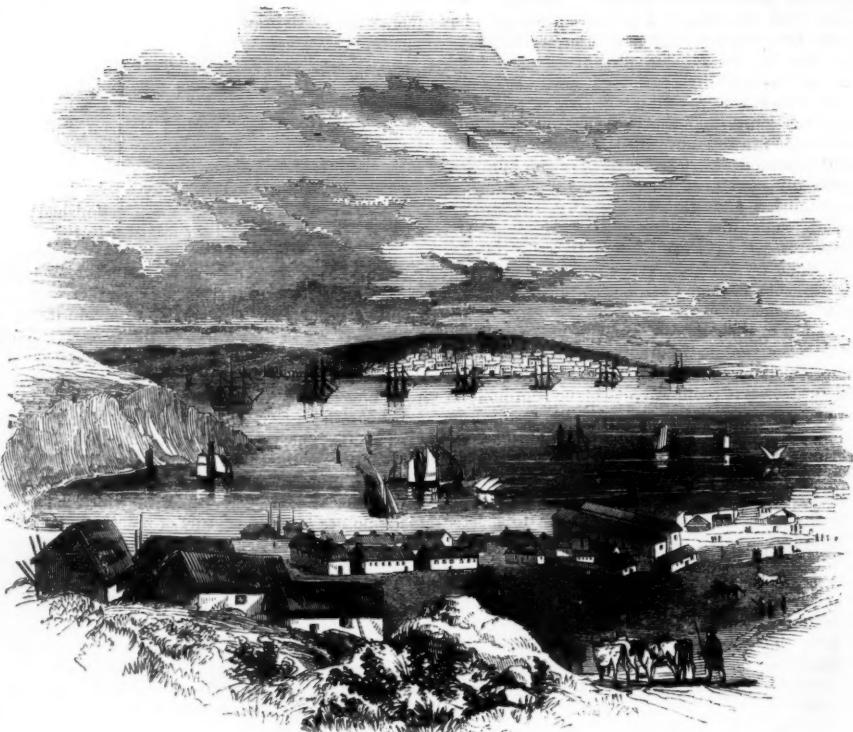
and read right on to the end of the chapter, in what I suppose should be called Somersetshire Hebrew, never faltering a moment.

"Perhaps," said the old gentleman, "you will have no objection to read the following chapter in English from the original."

"Not the layst, sir," replied William, and commenced it in the same breath, giving a good, correct, and literal translation, without hesitating once for the choice of a word.

I must confess that I was more astonished than I cared to show, lest I might minister to the vanity of the rural scholar; but I could not help complimenting the hedger on his competent knowledge of so difficult a tongue: and I asked him, with no small curiosity, how he managed to obtain it. His replies put me in possession of the following facts. He had never received other instruction than that afforded by the parish schoolmistress of his time, who taught him to read and to write a few copies and his own name. He had followed farm-labour all his life, but was better used to hedging and ditching than anything else. About thirty years before, a young farmer who employed him had given him the Hebrew Bible, of which he could make no use himself, by way of practical joke, telling him to bring it back again when he had read it through. William resolved not to carry it back till he had read it through, and resolved also to read and understand it too, cost what labour it might. He had bought a grammar for a shilling at a book-stall in the next town; had met with some occasional assistance from a travelling Jew pedlar; and by dint of persevering hard labour and comparison with his English Bible, had mastered the subject sufficiently in ten years to read it tolerably well. From that time to the present he had rarely read anything else, and had grown so familiar with the Hebrew text as to be able to pitch upon any word at a moment's notice, and could, moreover, tell how many times a word of any importance occurred through the whole of the Old Testament. He was perhaps a little too vain of an accomplishment so extraordinary for one in his station; but we all of us are too prone to magnify the value of an acquirement which it has cost us much persevering labour to make our own.

William lighted his lantern, and accompanied us across the remainder of our field route, observing that the dew was very heavy upon the grass, and it would do us no good to get wet-footed. We parted from him at the gate which led into the road at the foot of the hill. I saw him frequently afterwards, shearing away at the hedges or clearing the water-courses beneath them. He died about two years after my visit to his cottage, and I heard that the farmer who lent him the Bible had never reclaimed it, but had had it placed under his head in the coffin, and buried along with him. My old friend and instructor, too, has long ago departed to his rest: for more than twenty years the long grass has waved over his grave, distinguished only by a foot-stone with two initials, over which the dark green moss is creeping. But the seed which with aged hand he scattered, has sprung up and borne good fruit; and his memory yet blossoms in the dwellings of the poor.



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF SEBASTOPOL.

A GLANCE AT SEBASTOPOL.

It is curious to observe how, in the progress of human events, places of whose existence we were scarcely cognizant are ever and anon upheaved from the obscurity in which they had hitherto been buried, and elevated suddenly into a world-wide notoriety. Such, in some measure, has been the case with Sebastopol—the Portsmouth of southern Russia. It is true that, in this instance, the place was indistinctly known as a naval station in the Black Sea, upon whose harbours and fortifications the northern autocrat has for some years past been lavishing enormous sums of money, with the view of rendering the former a commodious nursery and anchorage for his rising fleet, and the latter, like another Gibraltar, impregnable to all hostile assaults. Yet, notwithstanding our general knowledge of these facts, it is not until we are brought, after a forty years' reign of peace, to the verge, it may be, of a prolonged war, that we awake to a perception of the vast importance of this recently-created stronghold, and the momentous part it is likely to take in the impending struggle. At such a crisis, then, as the present, when all eyes are turning instinctively to this spot in the Crimea, no apology will be needed by our readers for presenting to them a pictorial representation of Sebastopol, together with such information as will serve

to dissipate in part the mystery in which this arsenal has heretofore been enshrouded.

The creation of this naval station has sprung out of the Czar's aggressive designs in the east; and it forms the base of all his military operations south of the Crimea, as well as the key to his oriental possessions. Its importance in connexion with the long-cherished schemes of Russian aggrandisement attracted the keen eye of Catherine II as early as 1780, up to which time the site of the present city and stronghold had been occupied by nothing more pretentious than a miserable village of Tartar huts, named Akhtier. The natural advantages of the harbour for a first-rate naval port and arsenal are very great, and everything that art and skill could do to supplement these adaptations have apparently been done; so that Sebastopol is now supposed by its founders to be second to scarcely any fortress in the world. Other competent judges, however, entertain an opinion decidedly at variance with that prompted by Russian vanity. The principal houses and public buildings, as well as the fortifications, it appears, are constructed of a calcareous limestone, in consequence of which it is believed that they might speedily be dismantled and destroyed by a well-directed fire from the heavy guns of line-of-battle ships.

If Mr. Oliphant's representations, moreover, may be depended upon, we may certainly moderate

our fears regarding the impenetrable strength of this formidable-looking place. On visiting it seawards, in a steamer, he says that at one point the vessel was commanded by 1200 pieces of artillery. Fortunately for a hostile fleet, however, he afterwards learnt, he tells us, that these guns could not be discharged without bringing down the rotten barriers upon which they are placed, and which are so badly constructed that they look as if they had been done by contract. Four of the forts consist of three tiers of batteries. It is further said, in disparagement of these strongholds, that the rooms in which the guns are worked are so narrow and ill-ventilated, that the artillerymen would be inevitably stifled in the attempt to discharge their guns. "Of one fact," says Mr. Oliphant, "there can be no doubt, that however well fortified may be the approaches to Sebastopol by sea, there is nothing whatever to prevent any number of troops landing a few miles to the south of the town, in one of the six convenient bays with which the coast, as far as cape Kherson, is indented, and, marching down the main street (provided they were strong enough to defeat any military force that might be opposed to them in the open field), sack the town and burn the fleet." It is sad to reflect that before these lines reach the eye of the public, a sanguinary collision may have taken place on this theatre of war, which will set at rest for ever this much-debated question. Should Sebastopol fall into the hands of the Turks and their naval allies, or its munitions and materials of war be burnt, the imperial forces in Asia, bereft of reinforcements, would probably be cut off entirely, while every Russian merchant vessel would be driven from the Euxine.

Passing from the fortifications that defend the lofty coast of Sebastopol, the next important objects of interest are the huge wooden bulwarks that float in its harbours. The same disposition to exaggerate the strength and formidableness of everything pertaining to Russia would seem to have prevailed also with respect to these armaments. That the Czar has of late years constructed and equipped a large number of powerful-looking vessels, fitted up with all the modern appliances of naval architecture, cannot be disputed; but a more intimate acquaintance with them discloses elements of weakness where we should have least expected to meet with them. In reference to the Baltic fleet, which has so often been held forth as a bugbear to frighten Englishmen into an increase of their navy, we have seen it lately stated in the newspapers, apparently on good authority, that on recently testing their capabilities for active service, the admiral pronounced one half of the ships to be practically worthless. Mr. Oliphant expresses the surprise he felt, on visiting Sebastopol, to see the large numbers of hulks moored in the creeks which intersect the town, where they are used as magazines or prison-ships; having been reduced to that condition, not by the buffettings of the ocean or the injuries sustained in combat, but simply by reposing for eight or ten years upon the quiet bosom of the harbour. After the expiration of that period, their timbers, composed of fir or pine-wood never properly seasoned, become perfectly rotten. This result, chiefly owing to inherent decay, is much accelerated by the ravages of a de-

structive sea-worm that abounds along the shores of the Crimea and in the harbour of Sebastopol. It is said that this insect costs the Russian government several thousands a year, and is one of the most serious obstacles to the formation of an efficient navy on the Black Sea. In less than two years, if a vessel is not copper-sheathed, these worms pierce through the whole of the outer timbers. Hence it is found necessary to counteract their operations by careening the vessel every two years, and scorching the outside of the bottom with pitch and juniper wood.

That Russia—a country whose forests are capable of furnishing such excellent and inexhaustible materials for the construction of a maritime armament—should be unable to send from her dockyards a better article than it seems she is producing, may well excite our surprise; but all wonder will cease on looking into the melancholy picture which Mr. Oliphant draws of the universal corruption and venality that pervades all grades of officials in the empire. The immense resources lavished upon the object ought to secure the creation of a fleet unsurpassed by that of any other power, and probably would do so, were it not for the flagrant system of jobbery and plunder that transfers most of the money ostensibly appropriated to this purpose to the pockets of the ill-paid functionaries. It often happens that when a quantity of well-seasoned oak is required for naval purposes, as many as eight contractors and sub-contractors are engaged in one transaction, each one receiving his bribe or getting his profit, while the wood, as might be expected, turns out to be nothing better than green pine and fir, of which perhaps a 120-gun ship, that is found to be utterly unfit for service in five years, is built. In illustration of this state of things, Mr. Oliphant states that out of the imposing array which the docks and harbours presented at the time of his visit, there were only two ships considered to be in a condition to undertake a voyage round the Cape.

Nor are the seamen, according to the same authority, any exception to this universal characteristic of all Russian things and institutions; for nothing in the emperor's dominions is what it seems to be. It is the land of specious appearances, as all observant travellers testify. At the time of Mr. Oliphant's visit, so recently as the autumn of 1852, the Czar came to Sebastopol to inspect the arsenal and witness the evolutions of the fleet. In anticipation of the imperial presence, the garrison had been whitewashing their barracks, and drilling themselves with praiseworthy perseverance; while the whole dockyard force had been engaged for months in getting the ships into the best presentable condition. The emperor, it appears, did not, as was expected, accompany the fleet in its cruise, but from what he saw of it from shore, he expressed himself very much disappointed with its performances. Nor was his disapproval of what met his eye confined to mere verbal expressions of dissatisfaction; for on quitting Sebastopol he left among the military portion of the community a reminiscence that was calculated to produce a deep impression. Scarcely had the smoke of the steamer by which the autocrat returned vanished from the horizon, when, in a smothered whisper, one soldier confided to another

that their ranks had suddenly received a singular addition. This accession was none other than that of the late governor of Sebastopol, who, in a significant white costume, was employed with the rest of the gang upon the streets through which, only a fortnight before, he had proudly rolled, with all the pomp and circumstance befitting his high position. No dilatory trial had reduced him to this ignominious condition before the inhabitants of his late government; but the arbitrary fiat had gone forth, and the commanding general became the convict sweeper. The misdemeanor which led to this disgrace never transpired, though the general opinion appears to have been that the unfortunate man had been too sparing in the bestowal of perquisites and bribes for his own safety; without which, it seems, no promotion in Russia is to be attained, or security enjoyed.

From the allusions which have been made to Mr. Oliphant's visit to Sebastopol, it must not be inferred that any foreigner is at liberty to enter these vigilantly-guarded precincts. This permission is granted by the governor alone, and the order, once procured, must be renewed every twenty-four hours. Our traveller, however, resolved to see this mysterious spot without any such permission at all. Accordingly, he and his companion hired on the road a common peasant's cart and a pair of stout horses, which was filled with bundles of hay, the more effectually to lull suspicion, while a friendly German colonist, who officiated as driver, engaged to procure quiet accommodation for them in this city of dockyards. What met their eyes as they drew nigh the town, and what were their feelings on entering, is thus described by Mr. Oliphant:—

"As we approached Sebastopol, the great curiosity which I had long felt to visit a place of which Russians speak with a kind of mysterious awe was not unmixed with anxiety; and when, at a sudden turn of the road, we obtained an extensive view of the western shores of the Crimea, it was startling to find that the most prominent feature in the landscape was Sebastopol itself, with its lofty white houses, frowning batteries, and green-domed churches. Far inland, and long before the houses had ceased, the tapering masts of the ships were visible above the low hills; their sails, which had been hung out to dry, were hanging idly upon them; and as we approached still nearer, we could discern the large hulls of the line-of-battle ships floating, as it were, in the very streets of the town. My expectations of Sebastopol were evidently not doomed to disappointment, whatever might be my hopes of entry. There did not seem much to fear on that score. Our clothes had been reduced, by a succession of long steppe journeys, to a worse condition than those of Richter and the driver. A thick coating of grey dust rendered all minor differences of costume imperceptible; and as we leant back, half hidden among bundles of hay, with our hats slouched over our eyes, as if to keep the sun off, we flattered ourselves that we looked extremely like phlegmatic German peasants from some neighbouring colony. Our accomplice smoked imperturbably and incessantly; his friend occupied himself with his horses; and so, utterly regardless of the vigilant sentinels, we passed carelessly into the town, and half an hour afterwards were eating

beef-steaks at the house of a worthy German, who was delighted to receive us, having borne with the utmost firmness the scrutinizing eyes of whole regiments of conscientious soldiers.

"The reserved manner which, as unlawful visitors, it became us to assume at Sebastopol, was only in keeping with the air of mystery and distrust which pervades everything there. The suspicious eye of each officer I passed chilled the blood in my veins, long accustomed to a free circulation on the boundless steppes or wild mountain side. I had not taken ten paces down the main street, when my guilty conscience was startled, and the last particle of romance frightened out of me, by a sentry at my door suddenly presenting arms to the governor, who was accidentally passing. Here no harmless old ruined tower, perched upon the dizzy cliff, carried me back in imagination to the days of Italian greatness. No veiled women and sedate camels transported my roving fancy to the voluptuous east. The only variation in the view was from the mouth of a thirty-six pound gun to that of a sixty-four. I was ever oppressed with the painful consciousness of looking like an Englishman, and suspected the groups of soldiers standing at the corners of the street of plotting our apprehension. We were walking in a magazine which might explode at any moment, both literally and figuratively."

The travellers, not deeming it prudent to remain at Sebastopol during the emperor's presence, when the vigilance of the functionaries, both high and low, was likely to be immensely quickened, beat a timely retreat from the interdicted scene.

A TRYING WINTER.

IT is early in January, and the third week of an intense frost. The fields are white with the snows of yesterday; to-day the clouds are scattered, and the sun shines forth, but beneath its bright and sparkling covering the earth is as iron. The unusual severity of the season has been the cause of much distress and suffering among the poor in the little village of E——; nor are the rich unaffected by it. Many of them are anxiously inquiring what they can do to neutralise the rigour of the weather in relation to themselves, and some few are as solicitously pondering in what way they can retrench, so as to be in a position to relieve the distresses of others.

The residence of John Elliot, the gate of which stands a few minutes' walk from the village, and about as many from the London-road, will supply an example of each of these classes. He has just entered it; and if we follow him to his private sitting-room, where his sister awaits him, we may perhaps learn how their respective mornings have been employed. Of Maria Elliot, indeed, it would be difficult to say how her morning has been occupied. We find her reclining in any easy chair, wrapped in a handsome mantilla. She has long been an invalid; or, what is nearly the same thing, she has long fancied herself one. The matter has been rather taken for granted than intelligently believed by her friends; nevertheless, her ailments, whether real or affected, have procured for her

such an amount of indulgence as sadly to mar both her temper and her heart.

"Where can you have been so long, dear John," she inquired, in a querulous tone, as her brother entered, "on this miserably cold day, leaving me in this state of wretched loneliness?"

"I am sorry for that, Maria; on the whole, I have rather enjoyed my day. Cold it has been indeed," he added, rubbing his hands together, with a beaming countenance; "but still invigorating, and pleasant even, to a tough old bachelor like me."

"Pleasant!" repeated Maria, shuddering and drawing more closely round her the rich covering that enveloped her person. "Oh, 'tis an exceedingly trying winter."

Mr. Elliot laughed. "Those words have been sounded in my ears in a variety of places and circumstances to-day, Maria, and it is rather amusing to find them pursuing me still. But come," he continued, drawing a chair to the fire close beside her, "it may entertain you to hear what my day's work has been. I trust it has done me some good, and I am not willing to confine the benefit to myself. When I walked into the village this morning, the first person I met was Dr. White, who insisted on my company in a beggining excursion which he had undertaken for the relief of several of our most distressed families. Our first visit was to —; well, no matter, a lady who shall be nameless, whose dress and drawing-room were alike magnificent. We were no sooner seated than our fair hostess, with an effort to appear uncomfortable in the midst of comforts, addressed us in your words, 'Tis an exceedingly trying winter.' 'Yes, madam,' responded the doctor, 'it tries us in a double aspect; it tries both the body and the mind; it tries our constitutions, and it tries our benevolence. I hope they will both abide the trial.'

"Well, and what was your success?" languidly inquired Maria, making a faint effort to appear interested.

"Why, we were not disappointed, for, like wise men, we had predetermined not to expect much from fine people. The doctor opened the pleadings with some rather touching illustrations of the lady's remark; which, when he had concluded, she answered by drawing forth a purse, which, after turning it inside out, she held up before him, saying with a smile, not exactly of benevolence, 'Quite empty you see, doctor, quite empty.' 'I am not surprised,' the doctor began; how he might have proceeded I can only conjecture, as she cut him short with, 'However, you shall not say you have had your visit for nothing.' So saying, she rang the bell impatiently, and directed the servant who answered to go to Miss —, the governess, with her compliments, and a request that she would be so good as to lend her *half-a-crown*.

"Half-a-crown is something," said the doctor, buttoning his coat over the grudgingly-given coin, as we descended the steps at the hall-door; "and we might have got nothing. Ah! well, it is a trying winter, in more senses than one."

"Our next visit was at the house of lady Hendon. We found her and her three daughters cheerfully engaged with work, books, and conversation, and we received a welcome which lost nothing in heartiness by the refinement of manner with

which it was given. As soon as we were seated, her ladyship said, 'Our old friend, Mr. Mowbray, breakfasted with us this morning, and at parting he left us a word for consideration, as he usually does. 'My dears,' he said to the girls, 'since this severe weather set in, you hear many persons say, *'Tis a trying winter.* (The doctor and I glanced at each other.) Now I want you, with the Bible before you, to think over these words, and to find out what they import, both to you and others. My young people have been acting on his suggestion for the last hour, and they have found the words to involve a greater number of practical lessons than so short and simple a sentence would seem capable of containing.'

"What an apt introduction to our petition! We had here no misgivings on the score of success as we proceeded to unfold our object. 'My dear doctor,' cried lady Hendon, 'I am delighted that you have taken up this matter, and that you have engaged so efficient a colleague as Mr. Elliot. I am only sorry our gentlemen are from home; however, we will endeavour to supply their lack of service; and if sir Harry is not satisfied with the amount of our liberality, he will not allow the poor to suffer by our penuriousness.'

"'Mamma,' said Elizabeth, 'will you give for papa?' 'Certainly, my love.' 'And I will give for James.' 'And I for Louis,' cried little Lily. 'Oh, Elizabeth, that's not fair,' exclaimed Sophy, the elder girl, 'I ought to be allowed to give for James.' 'My dears,' said lady Hendon, 'I think you must divide the responsibilities of James between you, as you have not a third brother.' 'No, no, mamma,' replied Elizabeth gaily; 'we will not divide, we will *double* them; we will each give as much for him as he would give for himself were he at home.' 'And what will James say?' inquired the happy mother. 'He will say we did right, mamma,' returned both sisters at once. 'Excellent!' exclaimed doctor White with exultation; 'this is indeed a *trying winter*; it is bringing out the pure gold. It appears we can assay in the frost as well as in the furnace.' Lady Hendon laughed and said, 'Come, doctor, like a true mendicant, take your hat, and go round the circle; nobody knows what anybody gives in this house.' The doctor did as he was directed, and the hat was worth more than its weight in gold when he laid it again upon the table. It would have been pleasant to have spent an hour with this happy and unsophisticated group; but time would not permit, and we took leave after suggesting to lady Hendon that it might be well if she would recommend Mr. Mowbray to breakfast with each of the rich families in the neighbourhood in turn every trying winter."

"I had no idea," said Maria, "that the Hendons were so rich; they make no appearance."

"Possibly," answered her brother, quietly, "that may be one of the reasons why they are rich. Another may be that they give so much away. There is that scattereth and yet increaseth."

"Well, and did you make any other visits?" inquired Maria.

"Oh yes, several. I promise you we saw character enough to-day to supply a dramatist through a season. We agreed to make the *trying winter* our watch-word, or rather our *catch-word*; and at

every visit our first observation had reference to that subject, unless, as was more than once the case, and answered our purpose better, the *visitee* had the advantage of us, and introduced it himself. It was a point on which there was a remarkable oneness of judgment; but, alas! for the different results. One gentleman had a delicate wife, and to make the *trying winter* endurable by her, had been compelled to expend such a vast amount of money upon double doors, double window-sashes, folding screens, and a thousand other things, that he did not expect to have one penny beyond his daily bread for the next six months. He would really be most happy to further our praiseworthy object—truly delighted to be able to give largely to it—but one's own family had the first claim. ‘*You* know, doctor,’ he said, ‘that if any provide not for his own house—’ Doctor White was not willing to sit quietly by, and suffer Paul’s words to be misapplied; so, as reasoning the point was useless, he interrupted by taking his hat, and observing that our time was precious.

“The next gentleman we visited had not a delicate wife, but he had what was equally convenient—a delicate daughter. Doctor Murray was in attendance, and had insisted that an apparatus for conveying warm air should be introduced into every part of the house she occupied; he could not otherwise answer for her life in such a *trying winter*. ‘And these things cost money, gentlemen, you know; or, if *you* don’t, *I* do. It quite pains me to give so little encouragement to your benevolent object; but I have not a pound—will you believe me?—not a single pound, at present, that I can call my own.’ We did not say whether we believed him or not, but as the time would clearly have been lost in staying any longer after such an avowal, we took our leave. ‘Marvellous, isn’t it, John Elliot,’ said the doctor, when we were again on our way, ‘the amount of charity these good people exercise at *home*? They lavish so largely of their sympathy on themselves and their families, that they seem to have none left to bestow upon their poorer neighbours.’ These two gentlemen gave us something, however; though it would have made no material difference in our collection had they withheld it.

“A third gentleman, whom we visited, treated us with a long harangue on the ingratitude of the poor. He had been deceived, he said, scores of times, by plausible poverty. He liked to give, but he never gave now except on personal knowledge; he felt himself bound on principle to make sure of the worthiness of the object before he gave a farthing. Doctor White observed that such a rule was quite the opposite of His, who, when he gave to human beings, always gave to those who were *unworthy*. It may be our worthy friend did not hear this remark; he certainly offered no reply. The doctor then proposed to give him the names and residences of those we wished to relieve, in order that he might make any inquiries he thought necessary; but this he declined, saying, it was impossible for a man with his public and private responsibilities to tell when he might have leisure to undertake anything of the kind. We had found him in his easy chair, over the fire, reading the newspaper.

“A fourth gentleman informed us, rather more

curtly than courteously, that *he* never intended to let the public know the good *he* did: *he* wouldn’t let his left hand know what his right hand did. Others might think it well to sound a trumpet before them when they gave alms,—*he* didn’t. The doctor said something about letting our light shine before men; but he broke in, ‘There’s too much light already, sir—far too much; people see a thousand things now that no one pretended to see in my young days; and yet, somehow, dark as we were, or as we are assumed to have been, by the enlightened generation that are following us, there was then less jostling, less interfering with one another’s paths and plans, than there is now. Every one did good then *how* he liked and *when* he liked.’ ‘Or let it alone,’ the doctor suggested. ‘Or let it alone, sir; exactly so. Permit me—waving us politely to the door.

“‘What a *trying winter!*’ exclaimed the doctor, when we had quitted the inhospitable abode; ‘why, sir, no chemical process could make a keener analysis of matter than this winter is making of mind. We thought these men believed the Bible, but upon trial it turns out they don’t; they don’t, sir! not a word of it, except so much as they can wrest to serve their own selfish purposes.’ These gentlemen were true to their principles and gave us nothing.

“Well, these were our dark spots, but we had bright ones too; and it was truly refreshing to turn from such visits as those last described to the abodes of some who are earning daily bread by daily labour, and to see and feel the readiness with which they responded to our appeal. There was little Mahon, the grocer, at the head of High-street. When we entered his shop, he was as busy among his teas and sugars, his fruits and spices, as a bee among the summer flowers; he had time, however, quietly to listen to us, and when we unfolded our business, and requested his aid—‘To be sure, gentlemen! to be sure!’ handing us a sovereign; ‘tis our duty to give as God has prospered us; ‘tis a privilege to be able to give, and a greater to be willing. ‘Tis indeed a very *trying winter*; I don’t experience much of its trials myself, thanks to my Heavenly Father; but is that a reason I shouldn’t feel for others? I thank you, gentlemen, for calling on me; never pass me by on such occasions.’

“That visit was a cordial. Our next was to our friend Miss Yarrell, the schoolmistress.”

“Poor Miss Yarrell!” said Maria, in a tone half of pity, half of contempt; “well, I do think you might have passed her by; I really don’t believe she has been able to spare herself a new gown or bonnet these three years.”

“I can’t tell what she has spared herself, Maria; I only know she spared us twice as much as we received at the sign of the empty purse, and with a right goodwill too; not only giving her own donation, but introducing our mission to her pupils, who came eagerly forward with their halfpence and pence, some with the cherished threepences or fourpences, and one with sixpence, all probably the little new-year’s gifts of friends, but handed to us as if the donors were daily taught the pleasures of benevolence, and had learned the lesson quite by heart. Our last visit was to Mr. Burrill, the millionaire merchant, or, as some call him, the

dealer in plums. We were on our way to the cottage of the widow Magill."

"The widow Magill! Oh, she is on your list of distress, I suppose?"

"Not at all; she is on our list of contributors."

"Contributors! well, really that is intolerable; a poor creature that can scarcely put bread within her own lips! who can expect nothing but to be herself dependant on alms before long! such a one has no right to be charitable," cried Maria with righteous indignation. "It is scarcely honest of her to give away a farthing."

"She thought otherwise, however. Well, we were on our way to her cottage, when we met Mr. Burrill, driving home from the city. He reined in when he saw us, and, on our telling our errand, said at once: 'Well, gentlemen, I'll be happy to see you on your return; and—mind! calling after us as he rode off, 'I'll give you a premium on every pound you have got.'"

"His wealth is enormous," said Maria.

"And so is his benevolence," returned Mr. Elliot; "one just keeps pace with the other; one seems daily to nourish the growth of the other. 'If riches increase, set not your heart upon them'—that's his motto. Well, we went on to the widow's; and refreshing it was to see the spirit of contentment and thankfulness which reigned in her little cottage. Her liberality, too, abounded in the midst of her privations. 'It's little,' she said, 'that I have to give, but take it, doctor, with my blessing; 'tis the widow's mite.' As she said this she drew out of her basket a knit purse in the form of a jug. 'I haven't,' she continued, 'been short of work for many a day, and I've saved up this. I can't go out for my infirmities; but you go among the poor, and you'll find some one who wants it. The purse contained just two and sixpence in copper money. I thought of the lady with the empty purse, but the widow's purse was full. We at first demurred to accept the gift from one in such humble circumstances, but were at length compelled to yield to her Christian earnestness.

"We then returned to claim the performance of Mr. Burrill's promise. Well, I'll not say what he gave; such men don't do their deeds to have them blazoned abroad. It will suffice to say, he was the only one from whom we expected much, and we were not disappointed; for if we expected *much* he gave us *more*, and amply redeemed his pledge of giving us a premium on every pound.

"Thus, Maria, you have a sketch of my day. Shall I tell you what it has taught me? We often talk of self-denial in the case of the benevolent. Self-denial! why there is none that denies himself so much solid satisfaction as the man who cherishes a selfish and niggardly spirit. But 'happy is he that considereth the poor;' happy, in the purest enjoyment of earth, and doubly happy as breathing daily the atmosphere of Heaven; realising within his own breast the truth of that precious word, which could have fallen only from divine lips, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

God's presence with a man in his house, though it be but a cottage, makes it both a castle and a palace.—To a wicked man death is the end of all his joys; to a godly man it is the end of all his griefs.—That man lives long enough who has done his work and is fit for another world.

WRECKERS, WRECKS, AND LIFE-BOATS.

[FIRST PAPER.]

PERHAPS, after contending with a driving gale and stormy sea all day, the sky is moonless, clothed with clouds, and the night exhibits at every point the blackness of darkness to the toil-worn mariner. The rain pelteth pitilessly, and the drenching spray comes overboard like a deluge. The wind blows with hurricane violence, while ever and anon the lightning reveals the terrific rage of the ocean, heaving and rolling in tremendous billows. To and fro, up and down, hither and thither, the huge ship is tossed on their bosom, like a helpless cork. The gale lasts, and the danger increases; the pumps are kept hard at work, and the vessel has scarcely time to rise from one sea, before another as furiously strikes her. The masts creak beneath the pressure of the wind against themselves alone, for the sails are gone into shreds, and fly from the yards through the gaskets like so many coachwhips. Every one now thinks of the unfriendly strand with the utmost anxiety; the passing hour is eagerly noted, and daybreak looked for with intense impatience. News perchance comes afloat, that the men cannot stand to the pumps, the ship lying almost on her beam-ends, or that they are choked, and the water is half way up the quarter-deck. Lights are exhibited, and guns are fired at intervals as signals of distress. At length a shock is felt; and a thumping, grinding noise beneath the feet of the sailors mingles with the roar of the warring wind and boiling ocean. The dismal truth is recognised at once, that the ship has struck a rock, or run aground. "Keep to the quarter-deck, my lads," shouts the commander; "when she goes to pieces 'tis your best chance." The ominous jolting and grinding noise of the vessel continues; the decks tumble in; one after another of the hapless crew is swept off by the surge; while one universal wail ascends from the remainder, till the awful crisis of the total breaking up arrives, when the hardier survivors

"Buffet long the wave,
And grasp at life, though sinking in the grave,"

all frequently perishing, or a mere remnant managing to reach the land, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship." Such is a shipwreck—a terrible incident—and one of almost daily occurrence in the history of maritime nations.

Fierce gales and mountainous billows have not been the only foes of the shipwrecked seaman. Men on shore have frequently been more cruel to him than the storm, taking away the life which the ocean has spared, in order to seize upon the property scattered by the wild waves on the beach. There are few things more remarkable and mournful than the tenacity with which the barbarous notion has been retained that persons and property saved from the perils of the sea have been stripped by the elements of their rights, and spared by the mercy of Providence only to suffer from the cupidity of man. In the early times of Greece and Rome, little distinction was drawn between the stranger and the enemy. Hence shipwrecked individuals, if not slain, as the quickest way of dealing with them, were always plundered, and very commonly doomed to slavery by

the inhabitants of the coasts. But commerce and navigation demanded protection as they extended. Society also, as it improved, listened to the dictates of justice and humanity, and adopted measures to protect such unfortunates. It was at length made a capital offence by the Roman law to destroy persons shipwrecked, or to prevent their saving the vessel ; and the stealing even a plank from a wreck, or a ship in distress, made the party answerable for the loss of the entire vessel and cargo.

In the confusions of the middle ages, the old barbarous practices were almost everywhere renewed. Wrecks were deemed happy incidents by the inhabitants of the nearest land, for those who escaped to the shore were reduced to servitude, while the goods of merchantmen and passengers were confiscated for the use of the crown, or the lord of the adjoining manor, or seized in a common scramble. No efforts were therefore made to prevent the catastrophe by spectators on land. They were "wreckers" to a man—a common name for the heartless plunderers of the shipwrecked—and rather tried to render disaster inevitable, sometimes exhibiting false lights in order to bring vessels into perilous positions. Pilots had frequently a secret understanding with powerful barons, and wilfully run ships on the rocks adjoining their estates. Even sailors themselves had no sympathy with their suffering brethren, but pounced upon them as lawful prizes in their distress, though with the almost certain prospect of encountering in their turn a similar fate. About the year 1314 a ship called the "Blessed Mary," with a cargo worth 2200*l.* sterling, going to Gascony, was driven on shore on the coast of Angoumois. The wreck was plundered by sailors of Winchelsea, Rye, and Romney ; and when an enquiry to discover the perpetrators of the outrage was attempted by the warden of the Cinque Ports at Winchelsea, the people of that town, Rye, and Romney, perhaps the robbers themselves, with their friends, by violence prevented the investigation. So common were such proceedings, that instances to the contrary took men by surprise. In 1254 several ships were driven ashore by a tremendous storm near the town of Berwick. The crews were foreigners, whose language could not be understood. They expected cruel treatment, but being allowed to depart in safety by the bailiffs, they wondered at not finding men more savage than the tempest.

In common with the other maritime states of Europe, the law of England originally adjudged wrecks to belong to the king. But as the right could seldom be enforced by a distant party, the crown often disposed of its interest in such property to lords, great men, and monastic bodies near the coasts, who were better able to possess themselves of the spoil. Various attempts were made to remedy the barbarity and injustice with which shipwrecked people were treated. Henry I enacted a law, that if any person escaped alive out of a ship, it should be no wreck. The obvious effect was, that landsmen at the point of danger were concerned to see that no person *did* escape alive. Henry III therefore went further, and by charter at Merewell, in 1236, granted, that even if a *beast* chanced to escape alive from the ship, or

was found alive on board, then the goods and chattels in such ship should be delivered by the king's bailiff in custody to four men for three months, during which time the owners might claim their property. A treaty also concluded with Magnus, king of Norway, in 1269, contained a clause, providing that in case of shipwreck in either country, the goods on board should be protected by the authorities, who were to afford all the assistance in their power to the crews, and persons plundering were to be severely punished. A statute of Edward I, in 1276, decreed that where a *man*, a *dog*, or a *cat* escaped out of a ship, it was not to be adjudged a wreck ; but the goods were to be kept by the sheriff, coroner, or the king's bailiff, and any one might claim his own within a year and a day.

The dreadful severity of laws enacted against wreckers proclaims the prevalence of the practice, and its inveterate hold upon the shore population, quite as much as its enormity. In the laws of Oleron, under Richard I, the 31st article recites, that when a vessel was lost by running on shore, and the mariners had landed, they often, instead of meeting with help, were attacked by people more barbarous, cruel, and inhuman than mad dogs, who, to gain their money, apparel, and other goods, did sometimes murder and destroy the poor distressed seamen. In this case, the lord of the county is to execute justice, by punishing them.

But legislative interference was of little avail to check this conduct in the middle ages, owing to the disorders of the times ; and, especially in secluded and remote parts of the coast, wrecking flourished in full vigour down to a comparatively recent period. We have statute after statute referring to this disgraceful proceeding. By a law of George II, passed in 1753, it was enacted, that the preventing of the escape of any person endeavouring to save his life, or wounding him with intent to destroy him, or putting out false lights in order to bring any vessel into danger, shall be capital felony ; while the pilfering of any goods cast ashore is made petty larceny.

The brutality of former times has not been unknown in the present century on the shores of the United Kingdom, though the wrecking has been confined in general to acts of petty pilfering, and limited to the districts occupied by the most ignorant of the population. In 1811, the "Saldanha" frigate of thirty-eight guns, with a crew of three hundred men, was lost in a fearful storm by night, near the entrance of Lochswilly harbour, on the west coast of Scotland. All on board perished. Next morning the beach was strewed with fragments of the wreck, and upwards of two hundred of the bodies of the unfortunate sufferers were found washed ashore. Captain Pakenham's body was recognised among the others, and, like the rest, it had been stripped quite naked by inhuman wretches who had flocked to the scene of disaster to profit by it. It was even suspected that he reached the land alive, but was stripped and left to perish. In some parts of Cornwall and Ireland similar acts are not of remote date. Congregations on Sunday have been known instantly to disperse at the tidings of a ship in sight in distress, not to endeavour to save life, but to appropriate goods and chattels. The grossest instance of moral blindness

on this subject is mentioned by Kohl, the modern German traveller, in relation to the islands and marshes of Sleswick and Holstein. He had heard a rumour that, within the memory of living people, christian preachers had been accustomed to pray that their coast might be blessed—an abundance of wrecks being the blessing meant and understood, though not expressed! Assured that this was still done in some of the islands, he enquired on visiting them respecting the strange practice, and was referred to the Danish island of Romoe and others as the particular spots. A native of Romoe denied the statement, and said that when the pastor prayed for the coast, he referred only to fishing and the collection of amber. But a woman of Heligoland acknowledged having heard something very like the prayer in question, adding, that the minister did not exactly pray that ships might be wrecked—but only, if wrecks *must* take place, that they might be drifted to Heligoland! These instances of mental and moral obliquity are now nearly banished from the shores of civilized nations. Owing to the combined influence of the restraints of law and the improvement of society, the most generous assistance, the liveliest sympathy, and the warmest hospitality, have happily superseded the inhumanity of past ages. “The minute gun at sea,” “when the stormy winds do blow,” rouses the population on shore to vigorous efforts for the relief of the distressed on the ocean, often at the peril of their own lives, instead of exciting criminal propensities.

A case in point may be noticed in justice to a district which has been mentioned as of inglorious notoriety in bygone times. It is of interest from its peculiar circumstances, and as a deed of gallantry. About four miles northward of the Land's End, and one from the bluff headland of Cape Cornwall, two small islets rise from sixty to seventy feet above high-water mark, called the Great and Little Brisson. They are connected by a ledge of rocks, upon which a brig struck, early in the morning of January 11, 1851, during a thick fog and fresh breeze. The sea running very high, the ship immediately went to pieces; and the crew, consisting of nine men, with one woman, the wife of the master, got upon the ledge, which covers at half tide. They were discovered from the shore as soon as day broke; but no assistance could then possibly be rendered them. In this forlorn and perilous position the sufferers remained for some time, when they were all washed off together by one tremendous wave, seven of the ten sinking at once into a watery grave. Of the remaining three, one, a mulatto, contrived to get on a portion of the floating wreck; and after having been beaten about for some hours, he was rescued by some fishermen who put out in their boat upon the stormy main for the purpose of relief. The other two, the master and his wife, were washed upon the Little Brisson, which rises in a peaked head, and is alone resorted to by sea-fowl. The master first gained a footing, and looking around saw his wife struggling with the waves, but sufficiently near to enable him to pull her on the rock. Boats and men of the coast-guard speedily arrived near the spot. But after encountering imminent hazard through the day, all attempts failed to reach the hapless couple, and night spread its shadows over

them, left to spend the dreary hours on the desolate rock, exposed to cold, wind, and rain.

The next morning hundreds began to assemble as soon as it was light, and the number increased as the day wore on, till not less than from five to six thousand people crowded the shore. Towards noon the sun shone out, and lighted up the coast, which, with the magnificent scenery around, the cheers of the multitude as attempts were made to rescue the sufferers, echoed by the cavernous cliffs, rendered the scene one of the most exciting description. The sea still ran so high that no vessel could venture within a hundred yards of the rocky islet. At this distance, captain Davies, in a preventive boat, in company with some others, attempted to throw a line to the rock with nine-pounder rockets. This operation involved no little peril in a small tossed-about craft, as the person firing should be several feet in the rear to be free from danger. But he would not suffer any one to incur the risk besides himself. Having put his own men into the other boats, he stood alone, and discharged the projectile. A sheet of flame from the back fire for the instant enveloped him, happily without injury. The attempt failed; but the same gallant hand repeated it. This time the line fell on the rock close by the man. The spectators raised a loud cheer; and the woman was seen to raise her clasped hands to heaven. At this critical moment, the sun shone forth with increased brilliancy, and seemed to inspire hope in the minds of the anxious multitude. The man fastened the rope around the waist of his wife, and apparently encouraged her to take the fearful leap—a height of twelve feet—while she appeared to hesitate to jump into the foaming waters. At length his persuasions prevailed. They took an affecting farewell of each other; and amid the most breathless silence on shore, she made the awful plunge for life or death. Three immense waves now broke in rapid succession. The boats were entirely hid for a time by the boiling deep from the view of the spectators, and a loud cry broke from thousands of voices, “They are all gone!” But it was not so. They soon appeared again above the swelling waves, and the lofty cliffs once more rung with approving cheers. The poor woman was drawn through the water in about three minutes, and taken into one of the boats, where no attention that could be shown her was neglected. The men took off their clothes to cover her, but the billows had so beaten her exhausted frame, that, though she breathed, life fled before the shore could be gained. In a similar manner the master was rescued, and survived the passage which proved fatal to his wife. The daring exploit of Captain Davies deservedly obtained for him the gold medal of the National Shipwreck Institution, and pecuniary rewards were bestowed upon the men who distinguished themselves on the tragic occasion. Captain D. had previously received two medals from the same institution, one from the Humane Society, two from Louis Philippe, three pieces of plate from the Shipping Association and the Danish government, with a sword from the French chamber of commerce, for services of a similar kind performed elsewhere, in the course of which he had been the means of saving not less than two hundred lives.

Varieties.

PRINCE ALBERT A POET.

In that useful work, "Men of the Time in 1852," we are presented with the following specimen of his royal highness's poetical powers. "It will be at once seen," says the compiler of a biographical memoir of the illustrious prince, "that the sentiment contained in the verses is one highly creditable to him; and one, too, which receives illustration in the fact that the model houses for the use of labourers, built for inspection opposite the glass palace (they have been since transferred to Kennington Common), were raised at the expense of Prince Albert."¹²

THE TOY OF THE GIANT'S CHILD.

It is the lofty Inselberg—a mountain high and strong—Where once a noble castle stood—the giants held it long; Its very ruins now are lost, its site is waste and lone, And if he looks for giants there, they all are dead and gone.

The giant's daughter once came forth, the castle gate before, And played with all a child's delight before her father's door; Then sauntering down the precipice the girl would gladly go, To see, perchance, how matters went in the little world below.

With few and hasty steps she passed the mountain and the wood,

At length, approaching near the place where dwelt mankind, she stood;

And many a town and village fair, and many a field so green, Before her wondering eyes appeared, a strange and curious scene.

And as she gazed, in wonder lost, on all the scenes around, She saw a peasant at her feet a-tilling of the ground; The little creature crawled about so slowly here and there, And, lighted by the morning sun, his plough shone out so fair.

"Oh, pretty plaything!" cries the child, "I'll take thee home with me."

Then with her infant hands she spread her kerchief on her knee,

And cradling man, and horse, and plough, so gently on her arm,

She bore them home quite cautiously, afraid to do them harm.

She hastens with joyous steps and glad (we know what children are),

And spying soon her father out, she shouted from afar— "Oh, father! dearest father! what a plaything I have found!

I never saw so fair a one upon our mountain ground!"

Her father sat at table then, and drank his wine so mild, And smiling with a parent's smile, he asked the happy child—

"What struggling creature hast thou brought so carefully to me?"

Thou leap'st for very joy, my girl! come, open, let us see!"

She oped her kerchief cautiously and gladly, you may deem, And showed her eager sire the plough, the peasant, and his team;

And when she'd placed before his sight the new-found pretty toy,

She clasped her hands, and screamed aloud, and cried for very joy.

But her father looked quite seriously, and shaking slow his head,

"What hast thou brought me here, my girl?—this is no toy," he said.

"Go, take it to the vale again, and put it down below: The peasant is no plaything, child! how couldst thou think him so?"

So go, without a sigh or sob, and do my will," he said: "For know, without the peasant, girl, we none of us had bread;"

"Tis from the peasant's hardy stock the race of giants are— The peasant is no plaything, child—no, Heaven forbid he were!"

A SPECIMEN OF TUSCAN LITERATURE.

MISS CUNNINGHAME's case, in all its details, is already so well known that repetition here is unnecessary. For the simple fact of giving away a few religious tracts, not of a controversial nature, this lady was apprehended by the Tuscan police, and conveyed to prison. We now give a specimen of Romish tracts which are circulated in Tuscany without let or hindrance.

"A relation made by our Lord Jesus Christ to the sisters Elizabeth, Martha, and Bridget, desirous to know some particulars of his passion, who appeared to them after they had finished their prayer, and said:—

"My sisters, know ye first that I had 112 blows in my face with the palm of the hand, and three blows with a fist on my mouth. When I was taken in the garden, and on my way to the house of Annas, I fell seven times, and was dragged along the ground 105 times. I had 180 blows on my back, and thirty-two strokes on my legs. I was lifted up by my beard and by the hair of my head thirty-two times. I had one mortal blow. At the pillar I had 6,668 lashes; I emitted from my mouth 126 sighs. I was lacerated in binding thirty-three times. I had 100 punctures in my head. On the cross I had eight mortal wounds. They spit in my face thirty-two times. They inflicted on me 1000 wounds. The soldiers who took me were 303. They who carried me bound were three. I shed blood 38,514 drops.

"Those who shall say seven paters, or seven aves, every day, for the space of twenty-three years and twelve days, which finishes the number of the drops of my blood, I will do for them five graces in favour of their soul.

"The first—I will grant them plenary indulgence, and remission of all sins.

"The second—The pains of purgatory shall not touch

"The third—if they die before the time above said, I will do as if it were finished.

"The fourth—I will grant to every one of them as if he were a martyr, and had shed his blood for the faith.

"The fifth—I will come from heaven to earth in the hour of his death, to have his soul in my arms, and all of his house, and all his relatives to the fourth degree; and if they be in purgatory, I will carry them thence to enjoy the celestial country of eternal life.

"This relation was found in the holy sepulchre of Jesus Christ our Lord, and whoever shall carry it on his person shall be free from the devil, from sudden death, and from other bad deaths; and whoever has it on during forty days before death shall have the grace to see the glorious Virgin Mary.—Amen."

At the foot of the broadsheet, which is printed in wretched Italian, is an imprint—"In Ferrari, ed in Basano. *Con Licenza dei Superiori.*"

The fact that this vile tract is exposed for sale in Florence, in the most conspicuous shops, and all over Italy, in spite of the oft-repeated prohibitions of such exposure, until authorized by the Congregation of Rites, appears in singular contrast with the persecution waged on those who distribute Christian tracts, not controversial, but merely containing the elementary truths of the religion of Holy Scripture. The copy of the above was brought from the *Via dei Corretiani*, nearly opposite the York hotel, in Florence, in that very archdotal state where Miss Cunningham was transferred from her sick bed to a prison, for the unpardonable offence of circulating a few tracts that outraged no feeling of decency, and should not have provoked any hostility.—*Christian Spectator.*

HABIT OF THINKING.—Thought engenders thought. Place one idea upon paper, and others will follow it, until you have written a page. You cannot fathom your mind. There is a well of thought there which has no bottom. The more you draw from it, the more clear and fruitful it will be. If you neglect to think yourself, and only use other people's thoughts, you will never know what you are capable of. At first your ideas may come out in lumps, homely and shapeless; but time and perseverance will arrange and polish them. Learn to think, and you will learn to write; the more you think, the better you will express your ideas.